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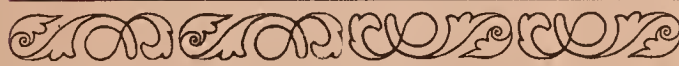
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How
to Write
Photoplays

A BOOK FOR BEGINNERS



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WHAT IS A PHOTOPLAY?

A photoplay is a story told largely in pantomime by players, whose words are suggested by their actions, assisted by certain descriptive words thrown on the screen, and the whole produced by a moving-picture machine.

In the photoplay we see the nearest approach to the best form of entertainment, that in which the individual is under no severe mental labor in seeing the thought of the author through words, but has the whole of the action thrown before him in the form of a continuous or near continuous picture, which, nevertheless, is given the added attraction and strength of the written word, intended either as explanation of motive of action on the part of the characters or as a means to bring out the latent humor of a situation or incident.

In the story or the novel the constant aim of the writer is to bring up mental images in the mind of the reader. The selection of the words and their arrangement must be so judicious and clever that the reader becomes unaware of the printed word and sees himself only as the spectator of gripping events. In the moving picture or the photoplay, however, the author is not under this difficulty. The words appearing in a photoplay are there only for absolutely essential explanation as well as for added attraction. Some times, a phrase or a clause aptly chosen can better express a thought or a complication or draw forth a spontaneous laugh from an audience than any amount of cleverly contrived scenes showing in actual action the same complication.

WHO CAN WRITE PHOTOPLAYS?

It used to be said that the most unlettered person could write a salable photoplay, but in these days of the photoplay, which has progressed strikingly along with the other of our industries and arts, it is absolutely essential that the beginner know how to express himself clearly and with sympathy. Therefore, the detailed synopsis—explained later on in this volume—and the increasingly large number of clever sub-titles which are now being used, must be told in a catchy, compelling and attractive manner—there must be art in them, as in the short story. In other words, it is becoming more evident every day that the photoplay is assimilating some of the short-story elements, is collaborating with the short story, in other words; hence, the increasing tendency to introduce some of the individuality and STYLE of the author through his production.

However, aside from the synopsis and the sub-titles, the photoplay is largely a matter of action told in the briefest, most logical, though technical, manner that is possible. There is very little employment of those elements that make the short story of very meagre plot so appealing and salable. If you can describe action in clear and strong phrases, sketching in logically all the motives and causes, as well as effects, there is no reason to believe that you cannot write salable productions from a good, strong plot. Though literary talent is not necessary in order to write a salable photoplay, it is absolutely essential that the writer have the ability to express himself understandingly and in a way that will best bring out the points of his idea.

THE DEMAND FOR PHOTOPLAYS.

It has been estimated that there are more photoplays released by the various film companies in a week than there are short stories printed in all the magazines during the course of an entire month. Frank A. Munsey made the statement, quite sometime ago, that undoubtedly there were close to a million people throughout the world interested and receiving pay in some sort of writing. That was before the photoplay came to life and reached its present enormous popularity. Consider, then, the number of pens and the horde of writers required to turn out for the motion picture companies four times as much material as is used by the magazines. It is very naturally seen that in all these hundreds of thousands of people yearly engaged in turning out hundreds upon hundreds of acceptable manuscripts, there must be thousands of others to replace them, assist them and to supplement them; the number of those engaged in writing for the film companies and the various magazines cannot remain stationary while both these tremendous industries go on progressing by leaps and bounds.

That is why, then, so many film companies are advertising for big, strong, original plots suitable for their stars. In many of our most widely circulated monthly magazines the film companies advertise month after month for suitable material—and are unable then to obtain even a small quota of what is wanted. We are taking an advertisement by

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Vitagraph which appeared in a small trade journal of interest to writers. This ad has appeared in virtually the same form for nearly a year and is still running.

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\$10 to \$100 Paid for Motion Picture
Plays

Comedy and Dramatic Plots, Suitable for production, giving a brief synopsis of story, and action of scenes. All Manuscripts must be typewritten. For further information send stamped and addressed envelope.

The Vitagraph Company of America.

And this very same company employs a staff of writers, yet it must advertise for still more material. It cannot employ enough people to write the comedy and dramatic plays which it so desires.

THE COMPONENT PARTS OF A PHOToplay

Every correctly written photoplay consists of four parts: Synopsis, Cast of Characters, Scenario and Scene-Plot. Two of these parts are absolutely essential—the Synopsis and the Scenario. Without them a photoplay could not exist. While the other two parts are not absolutely essential, they are employed by all good writers.

THE SYNOPSIS

The synopsis has been aptly called the "little short story." Its real function is to tell in a few choice words the plot of your photoplay, leaving out all needless detail and mentioning only those incidents and situations that form the distinguishing feature of your script. The synopsis is the first division of the technically perfect photoplay because it comes first in order. It is followed by the cast of characters.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

The cast of characters, or list of characters, is that distinct portion of the photoplay script immediately following the synopsis. It usually names all the characters, gives their relationship to each other, their general characteristics, and, in the case of the "supers," or minor characters, the various scenes in which they appear from time to time. The cast of characters is usually very brief.

THE SCENARIO

Following the cast of characters we start in with the main feature of the photoplay production—the scenario, which is an elaboration of both the synopsis and the cast of characters. The synopsis sketches in only the large, outstanding motives and effects of the plot, the cast of characters names the people taking part in the various transactions, while the scenario takes up, in scenes, both the great and small actions, motives, effects, etc. The scenario goes into detail; it explains logically the progression of the action of your plot. There is no description or dialogue in the scenario. It merely is a means of telling in as few, brief and illuminating words as possible what the characters do in each scene, how they do it, the motives, causes and effects. The scenario contains in addition to scenes, letters, inserts, sub-titles, together with all the rest of the technicalities.

THE SCENE-PLOT

The scene-plot is requested by a few of the film companies while others do not require it. It merely is a means of showing, to the director or to the stage-man, just how much work will be necessary to show your picture, how much scenery will be required for the certain number of "sets" in your scenario. It is a sort of diagram, a blue-print, a formulae, for the director and the camera-man to look over to discover if the story is told logically and that these men may know exactly what the extent of their part in the making of your picture is.

(Note: It would be a very wise step right here for the beginner to procure or study carefully a good, authoritative model photoplay as an excellent means of elaborating and

impressing upon his mind our definitions for the various parts of the complete photoplay script. He will then be prepared for a more detailed explanation of the photoplay's technicalities as they appear later on in this book.)

PREPARATION OF THE SCRIPT

Any successful photoplaywright will testify that the proper preparation of the photoplay script has almost as much to do with its being accepted as has the fact that it tells a good story.

There is more competition in the writing of photoplays than can be found in any other line of work. But this enormous competition has this qualifying solace: The article you turn out for the editor can be made just as valuable and attractive—if your plot, your idea is good—as the other fellow's. Thus, the extreme necessity of putting your manuscript in faultless form. After all, when you work hard over a certain manuscript, putting it in the neatest, clearest, most logical form possible, you are performing only an absolute necessity. For, unless a manuscript is up to the standard in appearance it is very apt to be judged below the standard in inner value, that is, with regard to plot value. No editor can be expected to believe that a person with brains enough to invent a tremendously happy idea or plot would be so senseless and shiftless as to throw this idea together in any old form, disregarding all the rules of submittal and carelessly violating the "common law" of the editorial office.

THE TRUTH ABOUT EDITORS.

There is a fable, in the air and everywhere, that nine out of ten of the editors do not read the manuscripts of amateur writers; that a "pull" is required to get a manuscript accepted; that big names count because they are big names only; and that even a good idea will be passed up by an editor if he sees that it has been written by an amateur writer. Now such is absolutely not the truth. The cause for this fable is directly traceable to the writer himself; moreover, the fault is his; in his blindness he sees it not but tries to fix the guilt on the editor! The real truth of the matter is: Editors have found out by actual experiment that nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand manuscripts that come to their offices in a crude, jumbled, chaotic state do not contain a good idea; they have discovered, in other words, that to a certain extent dress or outward appearance is an indicator of inner value and worth. It is not necessary for an editor to read far in a large majority of the productions that flood his desk daily. The manuscript with no technic, the manuscript with its misspelled words, its horrible arrangement, its lack of consistency and logic of order, will not be read by an editor because he has not the time to pore over the author's meaning, to spell out his words into their correct meanings, or to rearrange his incidents into some better arrangement whereby he can obtain a clear and single viewpoint of its possible value. Of course, it is true that there are some manuscripts written in crude form that contain valuable ideas, but the occurrence of such a state of affairs is only rare; this unknowing author with good ideas must suffer because he has been unacquainted with the truth of the matter. Consequently, now that there is no secrecy about the matter and you have had ample warning, **BE SURE YOU PUT YOUR IDEAS INTO THE VERY BEST FORM!**

Editors are ever on the look-out for big, gripping ideas by new writers who possess the new and fresh viewpoint and who have a wealth of new and novel experiences and observation to give the world at large. But no editor will use his valuable time in trying to discover hidden genius when there are perfect manuscripts to be read and decided upon. If a manuscript is written in even near legible and acceptable form an editor will and **DOES** read and passes an honest opinion upon it. To prepare himself for competition, therefore, the amateur writer must know the exact form in which his work should appear. He should possess a working knowledge of the photoplay, should possess a good, clear model, should know a reasonable number of the rules that distinguish this particular trade from others, should have some knowledge of all the essentials. He should be able to write his synopsis, cast, scenario and scene-plot in accordance with the accepted form; he should be willing to revise his manuscript a number of times until its form cannot be improved upon; he should be more than willing to do everything in his working power to give his manuscript a "chance."

YOUR WORK SHOULD BE TYPEWRITTEN

In these days of advanced standards, it is absolutely necessary that the writer observe the great dictum of the editorial office—manuscripts must be typewritten. You would not expect a dentist to go after one of your teeth with a crowbar or a pair of pincers picked from a carpenter's tool box. No, indeed; likewise, you must not expect the

editor to read your hand-written manuscript no matter how neatly written. A large number of editors specifically state that they will not consider anything but typewritten manuscripts. Therefore, the foolishness of submitting handwritten productions. However, it should not be so difficult to perform this very needy piece of work. A typewriter can be rented for three dollars a month and in this space of time the writer should be able to turn out three or four perfect productions. Or the writer may have his work typewritten by one of the companies or individuals who make a profession of doing this work. The cost should not be more than ten cents per page, including one carbon copy. If possible, the manuscript should be written on regular bond paper, size 8½ by 11 inches. This is the regulation size. A manuscript should be written on only ONE side of the paper and should not have its sheets fastened together with pins, clips, etc. Be sure to make a carbon copy of your photoplay, in case the original is lost or destroyed. Moreover, when a film company buys your original you will want something to go by when the picture appears on the screen. When sending out your production do not roll your manuscript. This is an abominable practice; it makes an editor incensed against a writer; moreover, the rolled manuscript is extremely difficult to handle.

HOW TO BEGIN A PHOTOPLAY.

Start your photoplay by writing your name and address in the upper left-hand corner of your first sheet. At the top of the page on each succeeding sheet of paper the title of the script should be written so that if the pages become mixed with some other manuscript your script may be distinguished in every part.

In the middle of the title page, about two inches from the top, write your title in capitals, like this:

WRITE TITLE HERE

Four spaces below the title, in the middle of the sheet, qualify your play by telling of what the general order is, in how many scenes, together with the number of interior and exterior settings, as:

Comedy Photoplay in 51 Scenes;
15 Interior and 36 Exterior Settings.

About two spaces below this comes your own name as the author. Then, in the middle of the page, that is, half way down from the top, place the word:

SYNOPSIS

Two spaces below this start with your synopsis proper, as follows:

Dr. John Lancaster is a great surgeon, a man of fine instincts, but one who has a hidden second nature. He perfects wonderful operations; he does inestimable good for mankind. But sudden periods come over him when he reverts to primitive type. He is possessed of a temporary atavism. He sinks into the lowest kinds of vice. He is cruel, heartless, vindictive, unscrupulous. He reverts to the cave man, to the animal where might is paramount. He is a modern Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

As the strange reversion reaches its climax, and death or a madhouse seems the surgeon's inevitable doom, Joan Wentworth, a nurse, enters his life. She is a brave little woman who recognizes the victim's genius. Fearlessly she faces all terrifying obstacles to fight his malady.

The victory is won, then Lancaster's half-brother appears. It is he who has sought the surgeon's ruin. Seeing his fiendish intent frustrated, the half-brother causes the hospital in which Dr. Lancaster and Joan are asleep to be set afire.

As the building burns, the half brother is shot by a maniacal woman. The surgeon escapes, bearing Joan in his arms. That life which the brave little nurse had brought back to him, Dr. Lancaster gives into her keeping.

By following closely a copy of our Model Photoplay you can ascertain exactly just how this should be done. The cast of characters, of course, follows the synopsis. The scenario should always begin on a separate sheet and should not come on the same sheet with the synopsis or the cast of characters.

SOME GOOD ADVICE

Following is some sound advice given out by the Lubin Manufacturing Company under the heading: "The Preparation of Photoplay Scripts." The part we are giving appertains especially to the idea of the manuscript.

"The needs of the Lubin Manufacturing Company with respect to photoplays change more or less, from time to time, but there is usually a demand for single reel light comedies and comedy dramas, with amusing situations and incidents, yet with definite heart interest, and strong dramas and melodramas, both single and multiple reel. To find favor, however, stories must be novel in plot and action, and of decided interest.

"The big criticism of the larger part of the plays submitted is that they do not contain real plots. They are usually abstract incidents, more or less interesting, without complications sufficient to hold the attention of an audience, or else are in the nature of long histories, telling the life stories of the character, without definite beginning, climax or ending.

"To be interesting to the public, a story must be written around some central theme of unquestionable dramatic value, and must have sufficient complication to prevent the ending being easily foreseen. The main characters should have a definite bearing on the story, and should be necessary to the point of the play. The early parts of the plot should be set before the observer as soon as possible and the story should then be advanced logically, scene by scene, until the climax is reached, after which it should be terminated as quickly as possible. The writer should know in advance just what his story is going to be and just what goes to build up the structure of it, without including rambling incidents or action which tell no part of the plot and without which the play would still be complete.

"The vital parts of all plays are novelty and consistency. Every successful story must contain both. But no matter how new your idea may be, it will fail to sell if the characters are made to do things which are inconsistent, things that would not be done by people in real life. On the other hand, every character may do the logical thing, and yet the play may be unavailable, because the incidents, plot or action of the story is old. Plays in which the main themes are loss of memory, the changing of children, the revenges of a discharged employee, etc., are of the usual type, and are unavailable, unless they are treated in an entirely novel way. The type of play that sells is that which is distinctly new and which contains a surprising situation or development or both

"Adaptations from standard plays, novels, short stories, etc., are not desired. The market is for original work only. Occasionally an unscrupulous person will attempt to sell as his own, a story taken from some old magazine; but such dishonesty is nearly always detected by the editor, and the sender loses all chance of consideration of later work.

"All films are inspected by the National Board of Review, which will not pass anything of objectionable nature. Coarse, immoral and suggestive situations are invariably condemned. While scenes of crime are not absolutely barred, they must be merely incidental to the story—not its main theme—and must always serve to point a moral. The guilty ones must be punished. The actual criminal act cannot be shown, although the scene may be carried up to the last moment before the crime, and the result may be clearly shown afterward. For example: If a struggle is going on in a room, the scene might be broken by another showing someone downstairs hearing the noise, then coming back to the original scene with one of the persons dead and the other standing over him.

"Remember that in a photoplay the story is told in action—not in words. Therefore, a plot must be one which can be understood from what the players do on the screen, not from what they might say to one another."

IMPORTANCE OF THE TITLE.

In these days of poster advertisements and glaring announcements in newspapers and trade periodicals, it is absolutely essential that the title of the photoplay should be the acme of cleverness. An apt, attractive, unusual title means good hard dollars to both the manufacturer of the pictures and to the men of your town who will produce your picture. In the trade journal, the manufacturer draws attention to one or more of his recently released productions by means of the title, the actors, the expense of producing the picture, etc. The more attractive, therefore, the title, the more likely is this picture to be asked for by the various releasing or distributing companies. Then, too, estimate the different pulling power of poster pictures, as they appear in front of the theaters all over the country. A general title will appeal to no part of our nature. If we pass

a picture house and see posters advertising a photoplay the title of what is, say, "Retribution," we have no particular desire to see that picture. We may enter the theater if the mood rules, but it will not be because of any possible appeal in the title. On the other hand, if we suddenly are brought face to face with a poster bearing the caption, "Among Those Present," our curiosity is piqued to its depth; an impelling power urges us to go in and see what the picture is about, how that odd title applies to the action or the plot. So there you are. There is a difference of many dollars between a good and a poor title.

GENERAL FUNCTIONS OF THE TITLE.

A good title is apt, specific, attractive, new and short. An apt title carries the impression that the title chosen is the exact and ONLY title for that particular production; that no other title could be used half so effectively; and that the script, headed by any other title, would be materially weakened. The specific title is opposed to the generic and non-descriptive title. However, there is surely no reason why a title should be too general if the plot is of any worth or novelty whatsoever. During the course of the story or photoplay, certain characters are bound to become involved in some complication—there must be a clash of forces; this clash, this intricacy of relations should be the sign board which points to your title; on this crux in the future relations of the characters, the title should be based; and, if this coming together of divers circumstances, culminating in the climax, is original and out of the ordinary, there is no reason to believe that the title, which reflects this phase of your plot, should be anything other than original and curiosity arousing. The terms, "attractive, new and short," explain themselves.

TITLES TO AVOID.

It is best not to select a title that will give too much of an idea of the plot. The title should aid in compelling and sustaining interest and in giving an atmosphere of novelty, rather than tell the secret of your plots. The climax should invariably remain a carefully hidden surprise. However, the general atmosphere of your play should furnish you inspiration for a striking name.

William Lord Wright says of titles: "Avoid quotations, mottoes and stereotyped names of novels for photoplay titles. Avoid the over-sensational title, such as 'Death or Divorce,' 'The Savage's Revenge,' etc. These smack of the cheap novel and are not appealing to the cultured. Avoid gloomy titles, and silly titles, and stolen titles. Novelty and originality are desirable."

Some authorities advise the amateur writer to avoid the title with alliteration, but it has been our experience that the general public is attracted by alliteration of a refined sort. Take, for example, some of the titles in use by the Keystone Comedies, such as "Pills of Peril," etc.

Some titles that have impressed us as being original and distinctly compelling are: "The Thousand Dollar Husband," "Molly Make-Believe," "Ashes on the Hearthstone," "The Boy Girl," "The Right to Be Happy," "The Little Brown Mole," "Max Comes Across," "A Four Cent Courtship" and "The Truant Soul."

WHERE TO LOOK FOR TITLES.

You will find suitable titles for your plots in the identical places and in the exact manner in which you find your ideas for your photoplays. A certain apt expression, observation or speech of a friend or person will suddenly flash across our mind as a wonderfully apt title for a production we have written or one we expect to write. The slang phrases of the day are another fruitful source for titles; also the idiom, the vernacular, the expression of the street, or any other portion of the kaleidoscopic mannerisms and phrases which go to make up the forms of our city and country life. Everywhere around you are hundreds of suggestions for titles—here, there and everywhere. A particular phrase or apt expression oftentimes serves as the basis for a plot and the title of that production. The Bible, too, gives up many quotations for plays, though it is wise to choose one which has not been used to death, one which is not too confusing or meaningless by reason of its obscurity. Then, again, good books and the activities of prominent people may be used in all their complexity as a base for choosing titles. Here is an example in which a historical event was coupled with the decisive action of a present-day heroine: "Mrs. Bloomster Crosses the Rubicon."

THE TIME TO CHOOSE A TITLE.

Without doubt the best time to choose your title is after the photoplay has been finished; the component parts then are all fresh in your mind and you have an exact perspective of the relative values of your story. You realize immediately after writing the last word of your play just what element of the action you wish to predominate in the mind of your spectator, and, whatever that element is, you should endeavor to reflect it specifically in your title. You may wish your title to reflect the change of one of the characters, in his inner or outer life; or you may desire it to picture the background of the plot, just as you consider proper. You may desire the spectator to view your picture through the eye of a certain sympathy or skepticism; or your title may warn him to be on the lookout for certain eventualities; your title may suggest a certain viewpoint, again, that is necessary to be followed closely, so that the full meat and meaning of the plot may be grasped. It would be a wise plan to reflect in your title that portion of the plot which stands out strongest in your mind; in this manner the spectator will be most likely to get YOUR view of the story and in this way will obtain the clearest picture. Of course, we are presuming that the plot will be clearly evolved, will be logically arranged, and will contain no elements of confusion or doubt anywhere within its unfoldment.

THE EDITOR AND THE TITLE.

Perhaps the wisest thought to keep continually in your mind when choosing the title is: "I must please the editor." Please the editor by all means; nine chances out of ten if you please the editor you will please the people who will view your picture, for editors are true and exact barometers of public likes and dislikes. There are a multitude of ways in which an editor may be pleased. He may have a predilection for a certain class of titles and a real hatred for certain others; your object should be to note the titles of all the plays you see, remember the company by whom they were produced, and make a list of the various titles used by this company. By this method you may obtain a fairly good idea of just what the editorial trend is with regard to titles.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A PLOT.

Definition of the plot has been variously expressed, but perhaps the briefest and clearest manner to explain its main function is to say that plot portrays struggle, in all its phases. That struggle may be a combat between the forces of the individual and nature, as it is in so many of Victor Hugo's novels, in which the hero or heroine is pictured as fighting against the tremendous strength of nature and fate. Or the struggle may be between the moral forces of a single dominant character. Thus, in Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde there is a struggle between the characterizations of the same individual; in the case of this story the struggle between the good and the bad moral forces becomes so powerful that both the demon of evil and the god of good are personified. In a recent film adaptation of the religious novel, "The Crucifixion of Philip Strong," the main character, a minister, is pictured as struggling against his awakening conscience to follow in His steps and to take up the sword against the evil forces of his community which he has only too long neglected. Then, again, the struggle may be between real physical forces, as it was in so many of the short stories of Jack London, in which stories the main character, a beast or a man, is pictured as struggling against some bitter or hereditary enemy. But, whatever the character of the struggle, there must be struggle of some sort; the photoplay without some clearly defined and original struggle, that is, a struggle which is occasioned by new motives or is worked out along new lines, is not a play with a plot. The absence of struggle marks the absence of plot and the beginning of a mere uneventful chain of events.

ELEMENTS OF PLOT.

The chief elements of plot are the beginning, the climax and the denouement, or the final unfolding of the complication. When photoplay-writing was in its inceptive stage editors were content to accept and feature material which had a big climax, or an unexpected ending and were content to allow the author to lead up to these events in a slow, tedious and uninteresting manner. Today, however, this state of affairs has been reversed. The author is expected to manufacture some plausible, startling situation that will precipitate the characters into some sort of a situation. The attention of the spectator must be seized from the first; hence the action of your play should NOT begin with the gradual introduction of your characters, should not give the multitude of commonplace and sordid incidents which ordinarily lead up to a crisis in a state of relationship. Certainly a roaring climax should be worthy of a startling beginning.

Birth is merely the mile-post which points to death; it is only a short distance from the beginning to the end. Thus, suppose we wish to write a play similar to "Among Those Present," a Black Cat Feature, released by Essanay. The amateur would doubtless proceed to open his action by showing the hero and heroine in love with each other. The hero would be seen proposing to the heroine, the heroine would suggest that her sweetheart ask her father's consent to their marriage, etc. In the picture as released, the play opens with a rush, a vim, a gasp. The father refuses the application of the hero in short order. Immediately the hero sets about to prove his worth, and, with the assistance of the heroine, things are made to hum. The spectator does not have a minute of time to speculate as to how things will turn out. Things move too quickly for that.

COMPLICATION AND CLIMAX.

Now that you have begun your play, are well started on the way to the building up of the complication, it might be best to keep an eye on the complication itself. It is the complication and its final crux in the climax which we are continually leading up to. Situation follows situation, and the mystery grows deeper and more involved. Solution seems impossible; then suddenly something breaks and the light appears. In the picture, "Is Marriage Sacred?" released by Essanay, the situation which starts off the action is the elopement of the heroine with a city chap. Her husband turns out to be a crook who treats her cruelly. Here we have more complication. The outcome might take a million forms. But the complication is not strong enough yet. There must be more action. The girl, or wife, obtains a position as secretary to a millionaire's wife and falls in love with a wealthy youth. Here is a greater complication. Will she marry the youth or remain true to her promise? But the newspapers report the death of her husband and she marries. Now, evidently, the picture has reached a logical solution. Such a solution of the complication, however, would be worth very little, for things turn out too easily for the heroine. To top the climax—an apt expression in this instance—her former husband pops up as a burglar; the report of his death was false; he attempts to blackmail her. The climax follows in quick order. The villain is shot by a pal in a struggle with three characters, and all ends well.

THE DENOUEMENT.

The third element of the plot is the unfolding of the complication, the untying of the knot, for which the technical expression is the "denouement." Usually the plot ends in short order after the climax; the characters dispose of themselves very quickly and the play comes to a quick end. In one of O. Henry's stories, however, the whole charm of the tale rests in the denouement. Thus, the scene opens with a young married couple seated in their home. Love is rampant, all embracing. The blushing bride voices a wish, a fervent desire. It is early spring but she desires a peach. So the husband goes out to find a peach above all. Oranges there are everywhere, but peaches are a non-plus quality. But yet there is hope. He knows of a certain gentleman's gambling establishment, hidden from the police, which makes a hobby of serving all the delicacies that the world affords. So he organizes a raid on the den, breaks in and makes for the culinary department. With a bound of joy he grasps one lone peach. His is the pride of a conquering Alexander as he places the desired peach in the hand of his beloved bride. But the bride speaks: "I don't know but what I should just as soon have had an orange."

PREPARATION OF THE SYNOPSIS.

The function of the synopsis in its relation to the editor is, in large part, similar to that of the title; it must grip the editor with its story, it must prove to him without the slightest doubt that you have a very excellent plot. He must be persuaded through the agency of a clear, powerfully told synopsis that he should read on into the scenario and into the detailed exploitation of each succeeding phase of the plot as it will finally unfold before the spectator. Of course it will be necessary for you to revise the synopsis after you have written the scenario and have given each event of the plot its proper place, after you are thoroughly acquainted with each incident as it will actually occur on the screen. Your plot will of course have been worked out in full before you give your pen authority to write one single word. But it is well known by all writers that, in the actual process of writing, ideas for improvement and change come thick and fast. As each separate situation unfolds you will recognize innumerable opportunities to change the action for the better. Consequently, it will be essential that you revise the synopsis to fit in with your changed scenario.

LENGTH OF THE SYNOPSIS.

An authority on good advertising would inform you that a pulling advertisement was one in which attention of the reader was grasped by some outstanding phase, either in the wording, a picture, or some oddity of arrangement; and in which the story of the article or service to be sold was told so effectively and so tersely that the reader immediately conceived a burning desire to possess himself of that article or that service. This is the exact mission of the synopsis. Very few advertisements are long; they tell their story effectively in a very few words. Their phrases are heavy with meaning. They are almost epigrammatic in some instances. In the synopsis the big heart interest of the plot should be sketched in concisely and persuasively. Indeed, in such a brief space it is even possible for the writer to use such a clever and picturizing choice of words as to make a distinctive style. This, then, is your duty to the synopsis; to get the editor intensely taken up with the big, vital factors of your plot, told in a sympathetic though vivid manner, so that he will go ahead and read your working out of your plot in the scenario. The average length of the synopsis formerly was from two to three hundred words. However, of late, editors have not been so stringent or restrictive concerning the length; they are realizing more every day that the synopsis can not be told in too few words, as over-compression spoils the effect. If possible, therefore, tell your synopsis in from three to four hundred words, less, if you can. In the case, however, that your play is a multi-reel of about five parts, you doubtless would be able to get more compelling power in your synopsis if it were told in six hundred words. Never go over six hundred words when your photoplay is to be accompanied by a scenario.

FORM OF THE SYNOPSIS.

As we have said before, your synopsis should be told in the attractive form of the very compressed short story. Right here the beginner should be cautioned against two great tendencies in the writing of the synopsis. He should guard against too wordy an elaboration or too choppy over-compression. Many writers fear to leave out some little detail which really concerns the main factors very little. The result is, the synopsis is extremely liable to resolve itself into a detailed repetition, told in a boresome and tedious manner. Resolve, in writing your synopsis that you will pattern it as much as possible after an advertisement which has as its object the selling of your goods.

The other evil of which we speak—over-compression—usually takes the form of a choppy synopsis, in which the author, in his effort to give all the action while attempting to keep the number of words within the required limit, leaves out all connecting phrases and conjunctions.

SHOWING THE CAST ON THE SCREEN.

A year or two ago, it was a rarity indeed when both the name of the author and the names of the actors taking part in the production were flashed on the screen. However, this only fair practice is constantly becoming more and more general. All the leading companies now give the title of the production, the producer and the author in one flash or heading and the names of the actors, together with their assumed or character names on another. This is only fair to the author as well as to the actor.

THE TIME FOR SHOWING THE CAST.

Different companies have their own particular time in which to introduce the cast of characters; their method of giving them on the screen also varies. However, the large portion of the companies are now giving the entire cast under the heading: "Cast of Characters." Under this heading they give the assumed or "stage name" of the actor, and immediately opposite his real name, as follows:

Andy Laflin.....	Harry Dunkinson
Sylvia Gonzales.....	Virginia Bowker
Hal Benson.....	Royal Douglas

This method is the one largely followed by Fox, Triangle and Essanay, as well as others. In the case of Edison, however, the name of the character and the appellation which he bears through the picture, together with his relation to the other characters, is given as each main character appears in the course of the picture.

NUMBER OF CHARACTERS.

The main reason for keeping the number of characters, that is, the main characters, limited to as few as possible, is that the action is thereby simplified enormously, for every character that is introduced into the action of a picture complicates matters just

that much more and makes the final solution more difficult. Therefore be careful to introduce no character who is not directly essential to a clear and forceful working out of the plot; incorporate no individual in your action who does not take a vital part in that plot.

PLANNING THE CAST.

Whenever possible, the author is urged to follow out, when planning his cast, the individual characteristics, mannerisms and capabilities of the various actors and actresses he has seen on the screen. Thus, certain heroines are largely seen in certain roles, such as a country maiden, a vampire, as in the case of Theda Bara and Valeska Suratt, etc. The value of the picture will therefore be greatly enhanced in the eye of the editor if he knows it was written with a knowledge of the ability of the actors of his company. In naming all the minor characters, all those who do not take an active and ever-present part in the picture, it is also necessary to give the number of the scenes in which they appear, as in our Model Photoplay, so that the producer may double up on the number to take part in the play.

ACTUAL WORK ON THE CAST.

It is necessary in writing out your cast to give actual acting names to only the main characters. Of course it would be a waste of time to give separate names to the Maids, Butlers, and all the minor characters who appear in your play. Simply call them "Maids" and "Butlers," giving the numbers of the various scenes in which they appear. Be careful, too, to give your characters names that fit their personality and that evince some element of originality. Concerning the description of the characters, a glance at our Model Photoplay will explain this at once.

THE PICTURE EYE

It is of prime importance that the author, before writing a single word of his play, take a moving picture of the plot as it exists in his own mind. If he finds that the picture turns out clear in each and every detail, if he is absolutely positive that there are no blurs or misty places on his negative, then, and only then, is it time to proceed with the actual telling of what is in his mind. This process is called "picturizing your story."

Suppose you have a story that has all the requirements for an acceptable motion-picture play. You seat yourself to write it, chockfull of enthusiasm and faith in the idea, and in the exuberance of your spirits, you see visions of a substantial check. Very well. But have you a visualization of the story? Can you close your eyes and see it on the screen? Or will you "get stuck" about the tenth scene when it appears to be running smoothly, and then finish along the lines of least resistance, mentally concluding that the plot is so excellent that the editor or director will finish the work you have so enthusiastically planned? This happens to about fifty per cent. of the authors.

The successful photoplaywright is the one who has developed the "picture eye." If you will visualize each scene of your scenario, abandoning the "psychology" that inspired it, you can readily determine how it will appear to the picture patron. The psychology of an action or development of an act in the photoplay is only psychology when the natural pantomime and business make it clear to the spectator. By the process of visualizing you can readily determine if your play offers anything different from others, of the same character, which have been done.

IDENTIFYING CHARACTERS EARLY AND PROMPT BEGINNING OF ACTION.

The necessity of identifying your characters as soon as they appear in the action of the play is only too evident. There are very few pictures, no matter how clearly or logically the scenes follow each other, which do not require an early identification of the characters. We wish to know who is who as soon as they are introduced into the picture. Speculation or puzzling over the identity of a character detracts from the pleasure and renders us unable to concentrate our interest on the unfolding of the story itself. The early identification of characters bears a close relation to a prompt beginning of the action. Thus, it is the usual custom of the amateur writer to waste a half dozen scenes in getting his characters waked up and started on the road to accomplishing something. Your characters should dive right into an amazing or interesting situation right on the start. This does not mean that anything necessary for the explanation of the picture should be left out. However, if your play cannot be made to start with something intensely interesting we doubt if anything interesting will develop later on.

SEQUENCE OF ACTION.

From the beginning of the first scene to the final word of the last, each scene should follow logically, clearly and sensibly in meaning the one that has preceded. Even though the play is told in a number of scenes, that should not warrant its being any less a connected story. Think of your play as a long chain in which the size of the links increase gradually as the story progresses toward the climax. Then consider how incongruous the chain would appear if the links were changed around in a more haphazard and meaningless order. The first law to remember in arranging your scenes is to tell a clear story and leave a unified impression.

INTEREST OF SUSPENSE.

Of suspense in the photoplay, Arthur Leeds says: "You should not only keep the spectator in suspense as to the climax as long as possible, but in building up your plot you should work in as many unexpected twists as you can without destroying its logic. So whet the spectator's imagination by springing little surprises and minor climaxes whenever they can be introduced without seeming to be forced. Make each such incident another step toward your climax proper; hold back the 'big' surprise, the startling denouement, until the very end."

CENTRALIZING THE INTEREST.

Centralizing the interest has the same relation to the photoplay script as the single viewpoint bears to the short story. Both are a means to make the spectator a part of the story, to enable him to transport himself or herself into the fortunes and adventures of the main character. Thus, choose which character you intend shall take the major part, the one with whom our sympathies shall be engaged, then let your play be developed with this main character continually in the foreground.

MANAGING CHANGES OF SCENES.

The numbering of scenes in your scenario proper will be determined entirely by the change of location. Each separate location, every distinct background or change of scenery in any detail must be considered as a change in location and must therefore be labelled with a separate scene number. When more than one scene takes place in one location—that is, if in scene 2 we show a nurse tending a sick woman in a bedroom and in scene 10 we wish to show the same bedroom, we should be using the same setting twice; that is, there would be no change of fixtures or furniture. Whenever a setting is thus used twice in a picture, always refer to the number of the scene in which it was first used, as:

10—Bedroom, same as 2—

Use as many exterior settings as possible, for they usually require only natural settings. Aside from the fact that nature is more beautiful and appealing than any artificial settings possibly could be, the cost of picturing these scenes is almost nothing. The usual scenario would rarely have half of its settings interior.

THE SCENE-PLOT.

As has been said before, the purpose of the scene-plot is to give the director, the camera man and the property men a working plan whereby they may proceed to assemble together the various sets for your play. The actual writing of the scene-plot should come after the scenario has been completed. For, until you have entirely completed your scenario you are absolutely unaware of just how many scenes and how many settings will be required to dispose of the plot to your satisfaction. On after thought you might decide to introduce another setting or several scenes. A brief study of the scene-plot in our Model Photoplay will explain its utility much more than any description.

WHAT IS A SUB-TITLE?

Glance over our Model Photoplay and note the part played by the sub-title. Note that the sub-title is a phrase or collection of words serving to explain, amplify or strengthen some portion of the plot, or action, which could not be shown to equal advantage by one or more scenes.

THE OVER-USE OF SUB-TITLES.

A sub-title should only be used when it will carry out some definite end, will impress upon the spectator's mind some latent, humorous, pathetic, tragic or other phase of the plot, or will serve some distinct object in being used. The tendency of the amateur photoplaywright is either to use them in the wrong place or to use too many of them. As far as absolute necessity is concerned, the technically perfect photoplay would not require any sub-titles; each scene would so logically and clearly follow the preceding that no extraneous explanation would be necessary. Now a technically perfect photoplay would not be artistic and the best play is that one which best follows the dictates of art in its highest form. The tendency of today is to get away, as far as possible, from the purely explanatory or mere informative type of sub-title and to use the sub-title which whets our anticipation of what is to come. Therefore, sub-titles are coming to be titles of the various situations. Thus, although we know some unexpected situation or complication is coming in a minute or so, we have no idea of its real purport, and the sub-title at this point of the picture is merely a means of increasing our interest, of heightening our curiosity.

THE WORDING OF SUB-TITLES.

Make your sub-titles as short as is consistent with good sound meaning. If a sub-title which expresses a thought is used in ten words and the same thought can be duplicated without loss of clarity in seven words, then use the shorter one by all means. Sub-titles take up footage and superfluous footage is mere waste. Moreover, the wisdom of making your leaders short, meaty, to the point, though artistic, will at once recommend itself to your judgment.

DANGER OF OVER-COMPRESSION.

In cutting your sub-titles, however, do not be too economical with your words. Do not make the sub-titles choppy, curt or lacking in their full meaning. Do not leave out any necessary connectives or adjectives. Say just what should be said and then stop.

SPECIAL FUNCTIONS OF SUB-TITLES.

The special functions of the most satisfactory sub-titles are: 1—To mark the passage of time; 2—To explain a portion of the action which could not be given clearly in scenes; 3—To "Cut-in" a scene; 4—To inject new interest and anticipation into the spectator for what is to follow.

Thus, if we wish to show that two years have passed, we should not want to trace the actions of the characters through all that uneventful period. An example of this use of the sub-title will be found following Scene 27 in our Model Photoplay. We designate the passing of this time by introducing the leader or sub-title: "When Night Came." Try to avoid the old, hackneyed expressions used to express the passage of time, such as: "The Next Day" or "One Year Later."

The second use of the sub-title is too obvious to require discussion. Some things cannot be made plain by mere action; therefore verbal explanations must be made on the screen. Example: Sub-title following Scene 2 in Model Photoplay.

The third use of the sub-title—to "cut-in" a scene—is quickly explained by an illustration. Suppose you have cause to show a house burning. It would be very tedious, monotonous and expensive to show the scene from beginning to end. Instead of doing this, you simply show the beginning of the fire, then introduce a sub-title, such as "After Twenty Minutes," and continue the scene showing the house practically demolished.

The fourth use of the sub-title—to inject new interest and anticipation into the spectator—practically explains itself. When it is possible to heighten the suspense of your plot by a few words of explanation or conversation between characters, it is wise to make use of the sub-title for this purpose. Example: The sub-title following Scene 40 in our Model Photoplay.

THE USE OF LETTERS, CLIPPINGS, ETC.

Letters, clippings, news items, etc., introduced into the play serve as a means of forging ahead more rapidly in the action. Thus, the information that is usually contained in the letter of one character to another, or a news item, will conserve the energy that

otherwise might be expended throughout the course of several scenes. Suppose you want one of the characters to know that a sweetheart has died. Unless he receives a letter or reads a notice of the occurrence it would require several scenes to show it plainly. When letters from one friend to another, or a communication between two people who might have much to say, are necessary, you should never attempt to give the full letter. It would be more than likely to contain two or three pages of various matter. Merely give that portion of the letter which is directly concerned with the progress of your plot and the giving out of some specific information. It is a good rule never to go over fifteen lines with a letter, and, if possible, be satisfied with less than this.

THE WORLD OF THE CENSORS.

A large majority of the pictures which you now see are passed by a National or State Board of Censorship. The primary object of the censor is to eliminate all those pictures that contain elements which might injure seriously the receptive moral code of the youth of the land, or which pander to licentious or degrading elements. Not only are portions of pictures disposed of which contain these objectionable elements, but whole pictures have been condemned and hence discarded. It is only a matter of policy on the author's part, therefore, that he should write only of those things which he is satisfied that no one would object to. And, more than this, to write of those things that give a decided impetus to our mode of living and a better value to our daily life. We want pictures that not only please or entertain us, but also make us better people.

WHAT YOU CANNOT WRITE.

We are giving here a list of those elements which should be rigidly avoided in any plays which you have in mind. Avoid: costume subjects, war subjects, capital and labor, feud and mountaineer, juvenile, allegorical, uncouth, ragged or illiterate main characters, sordid or repulsive, gruesomeness, foreign, racial or sectarian, religion, temperance, too much underworld, dainty, pretty or merely pleasing drama, western stories, or straight melodrama. Nothing is more disgusting to the average person than to pay good money in anticipation of seeing a strong, wholesome picture and be disappointed by a revolting spectacle of white slavery methods flashed before their eyes. Do not try to reform people in your picture. Do not be partisan. Write only of those things that appeal to all of us as a universal people. Another thing you should beware of and that is NOT to write a play requiring expensive settings, or the outlaying of huge sums for character costumes, scenery, train wrecks, etc. Let your background be with Nature as much as possible; endeavor to make the cost of production as low as possible.

Be original. Don't write of the old, trite, hackneyed situations and complications that have been used so often that they have become meaningless. Don't write of the eloping couple who put it over on father; of the judge who is forced to pronounce sentence against his own son; of the woman who is neglected by her husband and meets the tempter; of the little girl who is kidnapped by the gypsies; of the child who has a birthmark or a locket to be remembered by; of the brother and the sister, who, unknowingly, fall in love with each other; of the ranch hand who falls in love with the owner's daughter and incurs the enmity of the foreman; of the rival who endeavors to put the hero in bad by placing money in his pocket; of the discharged workman who swears to become revenged upon his employer; of the artist who lures the young girl from home, or any of the thousand and one stale subjects long since done to death. You may take an old theme and dress it up in new clothes, fresh situations and novel complication; but the change must be revolutionary enough to destroy all semblance of something old. Write of the original, be consistent and be plausible. Strive for the natural, imagine yourself in the place of the hero and heroine. Ask yourself if their actions are lifelike.

WHERE TO SELL PHOTOPLAYS

NEW YORK CITY FIRMS.

- Artcraft Pictures, 729 7th Ave.
Features Only.
- Authors Film Co., 1432 Broadway.
Features Only.
- Box Office Attraction Co., 130 W. 46th St.
Purchases rights of well-known plays.
- California Motion Picture Corporation, 126 W. 46th St.
Feature Films.
- Christie Film Co., Longacre Bldg.
- Colonial Motion Picture Co., 226 W. 35th St.
One and two-reel comedies.
- Cosmofoto Film Co., 110 W. 40th St.
Purchases rights of well-known productions.
- Consolidated Film Corp., 1482 Broadway.
Features Only.
- Eclair Co., 18 E. 41st St.
Western comedies and dramas.
- Edison, Thos. A., Inc., 2826 Decatur Ave.
One to five-reel dramas and comedies.
- Equitable Films, 126 W. 46th St.
Features Only.
- Exclusive Features, 71 W. 23rd St.
Features Only.
- Famous Players Film Co., 130 W. 56th St.
Five-reel features; big prices.
- Fox Film Corp., 130 W. 46th St.
Five-reel features.
- Frohman Amus. Corp., 18 E. 41st St.
Five-reel scripts, containing comedy.
- Great Northern Co., 110 W. 40th St.
Features.
- General Film Co., 440 4th Ave.
Features Only.
- Hepworth American, 7th Ave. and 49th St.
- Ivan Films Production, 126 W. 46th St.
Features Only.
- Kleine, George, 80 5th Ave.
Five-reel dramas.
- Hanover Film Co., 701 7th Ave.
- Knickerbocker Film Co., 220 W. 42nd St.
Features Only.
- Kalem Co., 235 W. 23rd St.
Strong American Dramas, about 5 reels.
- Lasky, Jesse L., 485 5th Ave.
Features Only.
- Life Photo Film Co., 220 W. 42nd St.
Comedies, dramas, tragedies.
- Melies Co., 326 Lexington Ave.
Comedies and dramas.
- McClure Pictures, McClure Bldg.
Feature films.
- Metro. Pictures, 1476 Broadway, releasing Rolfe, Quality, Columbia, Popular Plays and Players, Rolma, York. Want features only.
- Morosco & Pallas, 220 W. 42nd St.
- Mutual Film Corp., 71 W. 23rd St., releasing the following brands:
Masterpiece de Luxe, Mutual Weekly, Cub, American, Centaur, Horsley, Beauty, Gaumont, Signal, Vogue, Mustang, Lone Star.

New York M. P. Co., 1005 Brokaw Bldg.
 Pathe Exchange, 25 W. 45th St., Releasing Arrow,
 Balboa, Feature, Gold Rooster, Rolin, Pathe News,
 Thanhouser.
 Features Only.
 Raver Film Corp., 114 W. 40th St.
 Features Only.
 Selznick, Louis J., 7th Ave and 49th St.
 Five to seven-reel features.
 Sunbeam Motion Picture Corp., 220 42nd St.
 Tanguay, Eva, Films, Longacre Bldg.
 Features Only.
 Unicorn Film Service, 126 W. 46th St.
 Vitagraph Co., E. 15th St. and Locust Ave.
 Multiple-reel melodramas; two-reel comedies.
 World Film Co., 130 W. 46th St.
 Five-reel American productions.
 Universal Co., 1600 Broadway, Releasing the follow-
 ing brands: Nestor, Powers, Big U, Gold Seal, Vic-
 tor, Joker, Imp, Bluebird, L-Ko, Laemmle, Bison,
 Animated Weekly, Rex, Red Feather, Universal
 Special Features—Comedies and dramas, one to
 six-reels.

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FIRMS OUTSIDE OF NEW YORK.

American Film Co., 6227 Broadway, Chicago.
 Five-reel dramas.
 Balboa Amus. Co., Long Beach, Cal.
 Features over three reels.
 Celebrated Players Film Co., 207 S. Wabash Ave.,
 Chicago.
 Features Only.
 El Dorado Feature Film Co., 40 W. Mountain St., Pas-
 adena, Cal.
 Features Only.
 Essanay Film Co., 1333 Argyle St., Chicago.
 Two to five-reel dramas.
 Gaumont Co., Flushing, L. I.
 Five-reel society dramas.
 Historical Feature Film Co., 105 W. Monroe St.,
 Chicago.
 Two to five-reel scenarios.
 Liberty Co., Germantown, Philadelphia.
 Lubin Mfg. Co., 20th St. and Indiana Ave., Philadel-
 phia.
 One to three-reel comedies and dramas.
 Masterpiece Co., 1111 Van Nuys Bldg., Los Angeles,
 Cal.
 Features Only.
 New England M. P. Co., Highland Ave., Malden, Mass.
 Not in market.
 Selig Polyscope Co., 58 Washington St., Chicago.
 Not in market.
 Solax Co., Lemoine St., Fort Lee, N. J.
 Three to five-reel dramas.
 Triangle Film Co., Los Angeles, Cal., Releasing Fine
 Arts, Kay Bee, Keystone.
 Five-reel dramas and comedies.
 Vogue Films, 222 S. State St., Chicago.
 Two-reel comedies.
 Vim Co., Jacksonville, Fla.
 Slap-Stick comedies.